Cuvervftte

In the carriage that brought me back from Les Ifs, I thought of writing a TPortrait" of Gerard P. and of sending it to him. It would not be very flattering. Since he has no charity toward anyone else, he might at least see himself clearly. His fatuousness makes me unkind.

Yesterday the 14th of July, very small reward for my bicycle ride in the sun (fitretat). Yet I go back at nightfall to see the fireworks at Criquetot.[21]

The badly handled rockets fall back on the audience.

After the final piece of the display, a lantern parade, then a dance. Had I been more disinterested, I should have enjoyed even more those varicolored lanterns strung across the streets above the eager crowd, appearing vaguely distant in the clouds of smoke that the Roman candles, here and there, both thicken and color with a pink light.

On the stone steps of the town hall the musicians, who a moment ago led the parade, sit down and attack a polka. At moments the individual instruments lose their way; for several measures you hear only a bellowing stressed by an ophicleide that is still beating the initial time, then an abrupt caper on a clarinet. The dancers stumble on the pebbles, for they are dancing right on the square, which hasn't even been swept.

"Come now, gentlemen, no shyness!" shouts meanwhile Monsieur L., the notary and mayor of the village. "Choose your partners."

Only four or five couples risk it. Around them the rest of the villagers and peasants form a circle, surer of being amused by watching the others dance than by dancing.

A few years more and I shall write less good books—which will be

more admired because they will be more carefully read.

Today I found out what waiting is; not the impatient waiting that makes the horse froth at his bit, but that horrible anguished waiting in which, from one beat to another, the heart labors as if it had to push aside a blood clot. On the road, right there, on the embankment, under the burning sun, I wait for X.'s wagon to pass by. It doesn't come. It must have taken the other road. . . .

19 *July*

I still have in me an enormous sum of joy that I have found no way of expending.

[21] The 14th of July (Bastille Day) is France's Independence Day, celebrated everywhere with fireworks, parades and street dancing.